



United States Marine Corps
Lejeune Leadership Institute
Leadership Models



The Naval Postgraduate School's Christopher L. Page and Scott H. Miller authored the 2002 thesis titled "A Comparative Analysis of Leadership Skills Development in Marine Corps Training and Education Programs." This excerpt from their thesis summarizes modern leadership constructs, briefly discussing each model's applicability within the Marine Corps.

HISTORY AND PERTINENCE OF LEADERSHIP MODELS

Adapted from

"A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF LEADERSHIP SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN MARINE CORPS TRAINING AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS"

by Christopher L. Page and Scott H. Miller
Naval Postgraduate School, 2002

"The scientific study of leadership can be roughly divided into periods: the trait period, from around 1910 to World War II, the behavior period, from the onset of World War II to the late 1960s, and the contingency period, from the late 1960s to the present." (Chemers, 1984) The most recent models of leadership that have evolved are those dealing with transformation and strategic vision and are often referred to as the leader and follower schools of thought (Greenberg, 1999).

Theoretical leadership frameworks assist in analyzing leader development in three ways:

- 1) by increasing understanding of organizations,
- 2) by predicting successful leadership; and
- 3) by enhancing desired results.

The following discussion is not intended to fit Marine Corps leadership into any one model, but to compare and contrast models reflective of the concepts and ideas typically emphasized in training and education courses. The goal of this discussion is to outline contemporary leadership models in terms of congruence with actual Marine Corps leadership training and education.

1. Genetic Leadership Theory

The idea that "leaders are born, not made" is known as genetic theory. It also implies that these "born leaders" need no training as they mature. Genetic theory dates back to the monarchies of Europe and is at the extreme end of the nature-nurture spectrum (Montana & Charnov, 2000). The Marine Corps screens and evaluates candidates for leadership positions based on demonstrated potential. Although not a pure application of genetic theory, certain inherent capabilities are expected and rewarded prior to selection.





2. Trait Theory

Trait theory focuses on the concept that great leaders possess different traits than the average person. Also known as “Great Leader Theory,” trait theory asserts that effective leaders can be described in terms of various sets of attributes and traits such as perseverance, honesty, physical stamina, etc. Research indicates that possession of the right traits alone does not necessarily make a person a great leader, but it may increase the probability (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1995). *The trait model is the foundation of Marine Corps ideas on leadership as demonstrated by its fourteen leadership traits and eleven leadership principles.* These traits and principles are taught and reinforced at every institutional level.

3. Behavior Theory

Behavioral theory focuses on the idea that successful leaders display certain identifiable behaviors. The driving principle is that there is one correct leadership style that applies to all situations. This approach was developed from the idea that leaders’ behavioral styles could be depicted along a continuum ranging from authoritarian to democratic leadership (Hersey & Blanchard, 1995).

However, further studies have shown that there are two main dimensions to behavioral leadership: tasks and relationships. This resulted in a “managerial grid” with competing concerns for production (tasks) and people (relationships), as shown in Figure 1. “Country Club” style implies that the leader cares only for his people and has no real concern if the task is accomplished. “Team” style implies that the leader has high concern for both the task and the people. “Impoverished” style indicates a lack of concern for either tasks or people. “Task” style indicates a focus on the tasks and very little concern for the people.

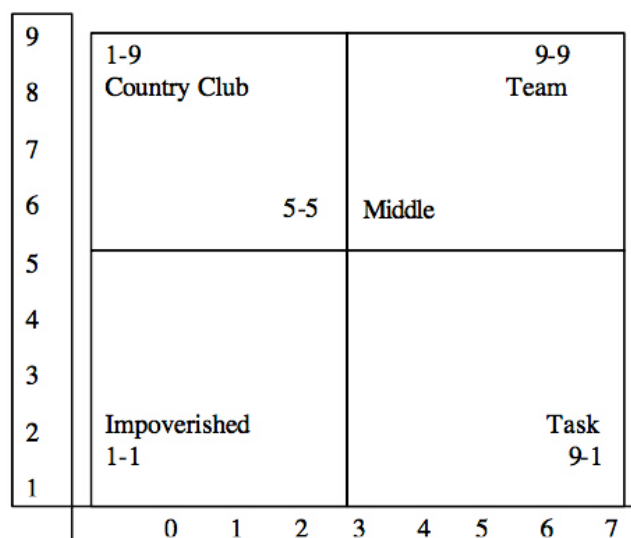


Figure 1. The Managerial Grid.
(From: Blake & Mouton, 1969)





Research also indicates that a combination of these two behaviors appears to be optimal in certain situations (Hersey & Blanchard, 1995). Application of skills to resolve problems or handle conflict is often a product of the style of leadership of the individual in question.

4. Contingency or Situational Leadership Models

Contingency theory has roots in behavioral theory, but says that leadership styles can vary to fit the situation. According to Chemers, 1984, the situational characteristics that are most relevant are:

- Expected support, acceptance, and commitment to the decision by the subordinates
- Amount of structured, clear, decision-relevant information available to the leader

From this, three general rules were developed to determine which style of leadership is most effective:

- Autocratic decisions are less time consuming, and all other things being equal, more efficient
- If the leader does not have the structure and information to make a good decision, they must use subordinates to get information and advice
- If the subordinates do not place sufficient trust or confidence in their leader to accept their decision, the leader must use a more democratic process to gain acceptance

These indicate that leaders must change their style to fit the situation. However, researchers disagree on the ability of a leader to match styles to the situation: some researchers assert that a leader can change style to fit the situation; others indicate that style is based more on personality, which is difficult to change (Chemers, 1984). Contingency theory can then be a predictor of success rather than a plan for success. Most situational or contingency leadership models frame the styles as depicted in Figure 2 below. It should be noted that situational leadership does not imply situational ethics or the adjusting of one's value system to meet changing scenarios. *Interviews with senior Marine Corps course directors also indicated a high level of reliance on situational leadership to accomplish modern day missions.* The Marine Corps Strategy demands that leaders be prepared for a wide spectrum of conflict in the future (Marine Corps Strategy, 2000).



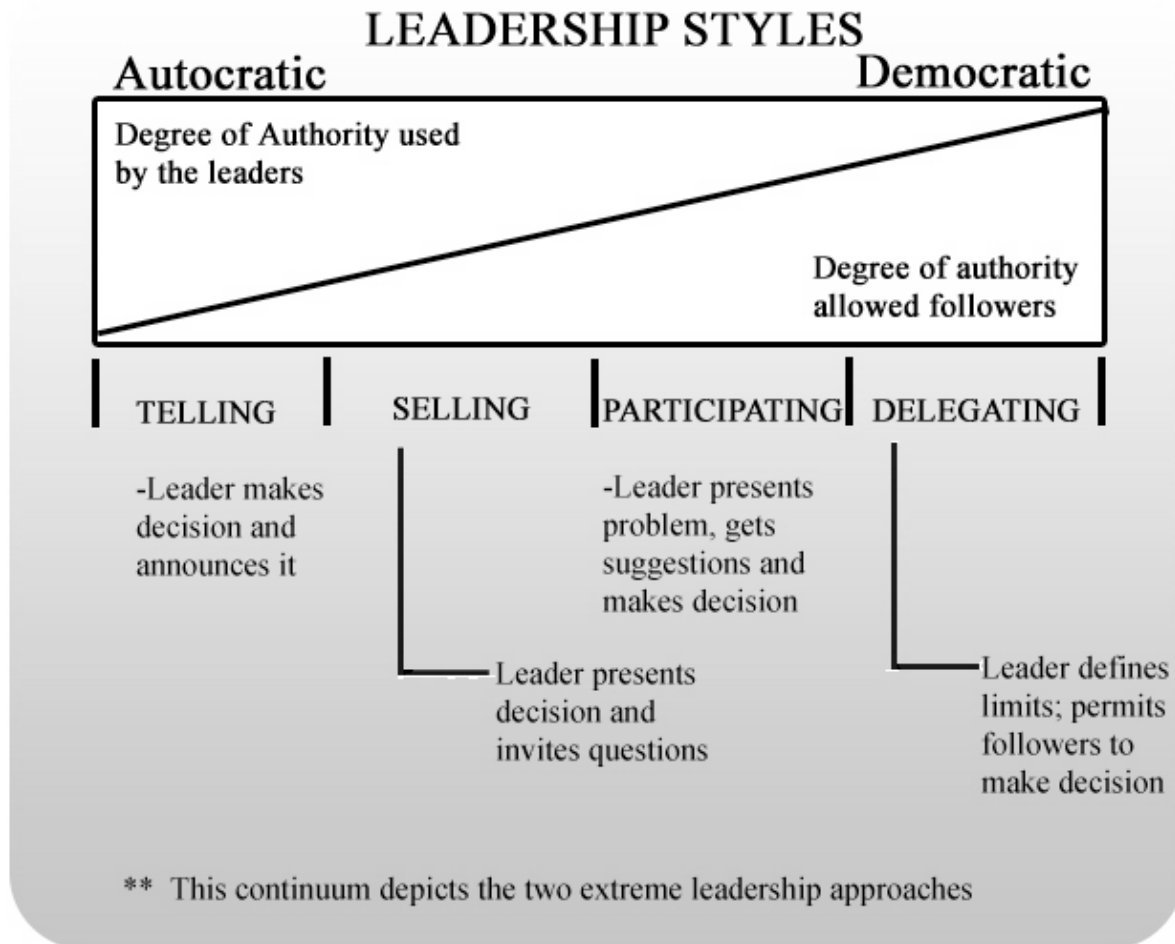


Figure 2. Leader Behavior Styles
(From: Hersey & Blanchard, 1985)

This model is frequently used in Marine Corps publications and course curricula to outline the fact that there are a variety of approaches to leadership that may work in different situations.

5. Normative Leadership Model

Closely related to the situational model is the normative model, which is based on decision-making effectiveness. It has four decision trees used to determine the leadership style appropriate to the situation, including effectiveness criteria. Categories are assigned scores relative to autocratic, consultative, or group nature. Normative theory is considered the most complex model as it involves statistical data to determine the ideal leadership style (Hughes,





Ginnett, & Curphy, 1996). *Normative theory is not typically used for daily decision-making or leadership within the Marine Corps; however, aspects of the model can be seen within strategic decision –making processes and procedures.* A good example is the Program Objective Memorandum (POM) used for budgeting and acquiring resources, where scores are assigned based on relative importance or value and decisions are made to optimize resources and people.

6. Path-Goal Theory Model

Martin Evans is originally credited with developing this model, which is also considered a situational model (Evans, 1970). Path-goal centers on the idea that subordinates respond favorably to leaders who help them make progress toward goals by clarifying rewards. Three important metrics are: whether a subordinate believes a job can be accomplished (also known as expectancy theory); whether the rewards are suitable to the task; and whether the rewards are meaningful (Montana & Charnov, 2000).

Path goal is characterized by deliberate processes and approaches that involve more strategic thinking and vision than previously discussed models. According to this model, leadership is task or mission-driven versus person or behavior-driven. The key behaviors of the leader are:

- a) giving good advice or setting parameters,
- b) supporting of good relations in assisting subordinates,
- c) participating in the sense of regularly consulting subordinates, and
- d) being achievement oriented around set goals.

The Marine Corps employs path goal theory in mission-type orders and within the Marine Corps planning process.

7. Developmental Theory

The ability to lead changes over time; that is, the leader enhances his or her ability through maturation or life experiences. The development can be due to environmental, genetic influence, or moral, cognitive, psychological, or physical development (Garner, 1988). Developmental changes occur from one stage progressively to the next. Insight and understanding becomes part of a broader understanding. Conscious components of understanding at one level become unconscious components at the next level of development. Accordingly, people at two different stages of development may not interpret events the same way. There are several characteristics of developmental theory:

- Developmental process is a series of transformations where the succeeding stage is different from the proceeding stage
- There is a definite sequence to the transformation
- A person cannot regress to a previous stage





- The development may stop at any point. There is no guarantee a person will continue to develop.
- Actions of those at higher stages are interpreted by those at lower stages in context of their lower stage. People at higher stages can interpret correctly the actions of those at lower stages because the stages are inclusive of lower stages.
- Developmental process is affected by interaction with the environment (Garner, 1988)

Developmental theory recognizes that leaders interpret events differently at various stages. As a leader progresses to higher levels of development, his or her ability to handle more complex issues increases. *The Marine Corps often places individuals into positions of increasing responsibility regardless of rank.* Although development does occur along the process, it is not necessarily implied or required.

8. Transforming Leadership Theory

Transforming leadership involves the idea of mutual relationship between a follower and a leader. Success is not only determined by whether or not the task was accomplished, but whether the goals of each party were met. This is a dramatic difference over previously mentioned theories in that it elevates the moral level of conduct and ethics to a higher level and has a transforming affect on both parties (Burns, 1978). Ultimately, this process converts followers into leaders and continues to lift the organization to greater achievement. *Within the Marine Corps, every Marine is simultaneously a leader and a follower, making this model important to understand.* It is impossible for any leader to have complete control over any process or person at all times. The concepts of command, authority, and responsibility, which will be outlined in Chapter IV, apply to the need for close correlation between leader and follower.

9. Greatness Theory: Leadership Diamond Model

The leadership diamond focuses on greatness as the epitome of leadership. It incorporates philosophy and the mind of the leader as the fuel for greatness within an individual. Development of the “leadership mind” as a behavior is the central drive because leadership in the extreme means greatness (Koestenbaum, 2002). Much like transformational theory, it encourages thinking and acting in new ways under conditions of ambiguity and uncertainty. While leadership is taught to subordinates, the leader is also a learner in addition to teacher within the organization. Greatness theory involves open-minded thinking where a leader is able to balance conflicting ideas, ambiguity, and polarity among personnel and get people to buy-in to the direction being set. Greatness theory implies the highest set of organizational standards and individual values. It is characteristic of, but not exclusive to volunteer and non-profit organizations such as churches, public assistance agencies, and charities (Koestenbaum, 2002). Greatness theory addresses the personal and strategic aspects of leadership by incorporating the constructs of vision, courage, ethics and reality as shown in Figure 3 below:



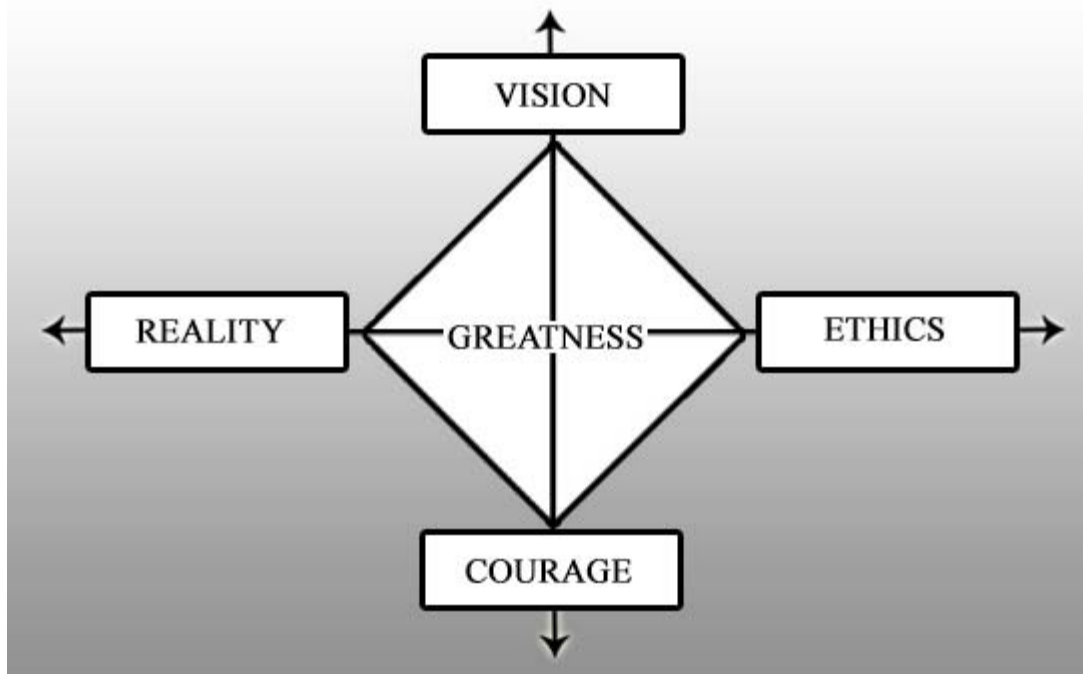


Figure 3. Leadership Diamond
(From: Koestenbaum, 2002)

The Greatness model touches on historical Marine Corps examples of tradition and adaptation. It exemplifies the core values of honor, courage, and commitment in suggesting the highest personal and organizational values.

10. Sacrificial or Servant Leadership Model

Whoever wants to be leader among you must be your servant
(St Matthew 20:26b)

The servant leader is first a person who has a natural desire to serve, not necessarily to lead. This model is also considered under the general school of leader and follower theories, but does not require established position or authority. This leader has a demonstrated record of selflessness, preservation of organizational goals, and concern for people within the organization. Although the leader may display qualities of other models, they are clearly willing to forego personal concerns, career concerns and even concern for their own life in preference of accomplishing the mission and taking care of people (Greenleaf, 1991). The hierarchy of sacrificial leadership is captured in Figure 4 below and is typical of many military, religious, and even some governmental organizations.





Figure 4. Sacrificial Leadership Model
(From: Hunter, 1998)

Marines who have paid the ultimate sacrifice in giving their lives for fellow Marines or mission have best exemplified this model. Although not specifically taught in any Marine Corps institution, the sacrificial model is suggested within the context of core values and the Marine Corp's rich heritage of personal sacrifice.

B. SUMMARY

Training and education within the Marine Corps mirrors a number of the models and theories discussed above. The models contain variables reflective of concepts taught at various stages of Marine Corps training and education. Understanding leadership theories contributes to a more thorough understanding of the role of leadership training and education, including relevance to actual experience.

